

# Public Health: Everybody Counts!

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## Fact Sheet

### Background

Until 2003, there has never been a full census of Washington state's public health workforce. We have known that many of our co-workers have training that we aren't aware of, or have valuable backgrounds that are different from the roles they play in their current job. They may have professional credentials that could be helpful to the system, if we only knew about them.

In order to speak more effectively about who we are and what we do ... we need to better understand our workforce! This information is important when talking to policy makers and partners in our communities. For example, it's very difficult to explain that we need more people in a specific discipline or region if we can't say how many people with certain skills or in certain roles we have now. And for effective recruitment and retention, we need to know how long we've been in these roles, and how long we plan to stay.

### Everybody Counts! A Public Health Census

From November 13 – December 13, 2003, the Public Health Improvement Partnership's (PHIP) Workforce Development Committee conducted a full census of the state and local public health governmental workforce in Washington state (about 5,400 people). We used the Department of Health's online survey tool, which served as an efficient way for staff to complete the survey.

This survey was the first phase of a project to understand the entire public health workforce in Washington. We began with governmental public health workers, but may later expand our work to include other public health partners.

The information from the census has provided us with a better description of Washington's public health workforce in order to help us plan for succession, prevention of shortages, training, and other changes. The initial report describes, maps, and begins to track the public health workforce in order to:

- Identify and describe gaps and concerns related to workforce shortages and planning for future public health vacancies, especially around recruitment, selection, and job satisfaction.
- Review the work we do, across all job categories, with implications for training, educational preparation, recruitment, and retention planning.
- Document the diversity of our workforce and our special skills and abilities.

### Timeline

#### September 2003:

- Planned overall census and survey process by subcommittee.
- Educated management staff (DOH and LHJs) about the census.

#### October 2003:

- Pilot tested the survey instrument at the Joint Conference on Health in Yakima.
- Reviewed results of pilot and revised accordingly.
- Began marketing the survey.

#### November –December 2003:

- Survey was ongoing throughout November and early December 2003
- Marketing continued throughout November 2003.
- Thank-you/"wrap-up" messages.

**March - April 2004:**

- Celebration event for the winning LHJ or DOH program along with notice of the LHJ or DOH program with the highest participation rate, sent to public health staff.
- Results are being shared statewide and emphasized as celebration of public health workforce during Public Health Week in April.

**Where can I get a copy of the report?**

The report is available to everyone on-line at: <http://www2.doh.wa.gov/php/survey/everybodycounts/default.htm>.

**For more information about this project:**

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